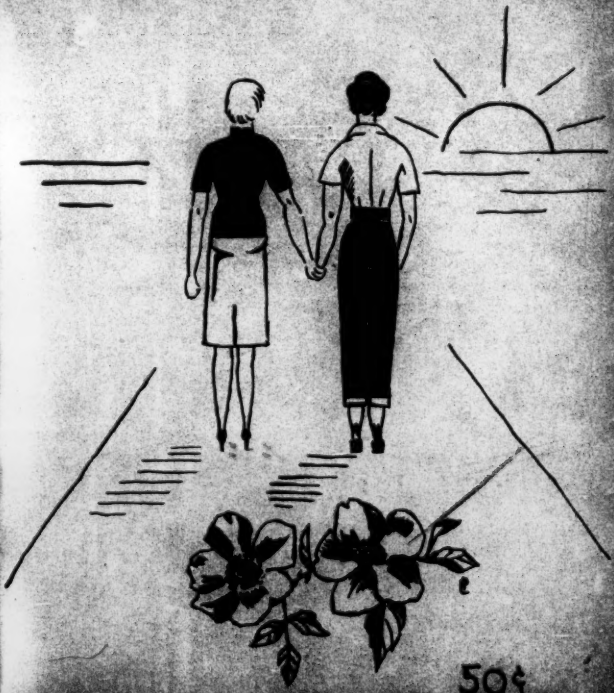
THE LADDER

MAY



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Daughters of BILITIS

A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROMOTING THE INTEGRATION OF THE HOMOSEXUAL INTO SOCIETY BY:

1. Education of the variant, with particular emphasis on the psychological, physiological and sociological aspects, to enable her to understand herself and make her adjustment to society in all its social, civic and economic implications—this to be accomplished by establishing and maintaining as complete a library as possible of both fiction and non-fiction literature on the sex deviant theme; by sponsoring public discussions on pertinent subjects to be conducted by leading members of the legal, psychiatric, religious and other professions; by advocating a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society.

2. Education of the public at large through acceptance first of the individual, leading to an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices; through public discussion meetings aforementioned; through dissemination of educational literature on the homosexual theme.

3. Participation in research projects by duly authorized and responsible psychologists, sociologists and other such experts directed towards further knowledge of the homosexual.

4. Investigation of the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual, proposal of changes to provide an equitable handling of cases involving this minority group, and promotion of these changes through due process of law in the state legislatures.

the Ladder

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THE LADDER is regarded as a sounding board for various points of view on the homophile and related subjects and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the organization.

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Cover by P.L., Paris, France

The Personality Variables Of Homosexual Women

Reported by Sten Russell

A study on The Personality Variables of Homosexual Women, begun five years ago, was reported on in Los Angeles recently by Virginia Armon, Ph.D., before a group of men and women connected with ONE, Inc.

Mrs. Armon is chief psychologist at Pasadena Child Guidance Clinic and director of Training on Clinical Psychology for the Child Guidance Clinic at the California Babies' and Children's Hospital. In 1953 Dr. Armon, with the aid of Vita Sommers, Ph.D., clinical psychologist, Veterans' Mental Hygiene Clinic, Los Angeles, and Howard Russell, a student in the field of educational psychology, began a study called "The Personality Variables in Homosexual Women." In the spring of 1958, Dr. Armon finished her Doctoral Dissertation for the University of Southern California. It was in essence a summary of the above-mentioned project.

In the project, thirty homosexual women, referred by ONE, Inc., or friends of ONE, were interviewed and tested. A control group of thirty women who preferred the heterosexual adjustment to the homosexual were also interviewed and tested. This latter group did not know the purpose of the study for which they had volunteered and were not interviewed to the lengths that the homosexual women were interviewed. This reporter asked why and Dr. Armon answered that it was because these women were all from a suburban, middle class, housewife group and would not or could not answer personal questions with the same freedom and honesty permitted by more sophisticated types or by those of a minority group cognizant of the need for cooperating to the fullest with objective students of the problem. Dr. Armon mentioned that one of the great difficulties Dr. Kinsey had had in his research with women was that in general only the more intellectual or highly educated women would reveal sexual facts about themselves in the personal interview form of questioning. One hundred women volunteered for Dr. Armon's control group. She took thirty who were married, had children,

and felt that their marriages were successful. None of the participants in the project were in therapy at the time. The mean age of the group was thirty years.

For the purposes of the study it was hypothesized that the homosexual women would:

1. Show more dependency than the heterosexual women.
2. Find female figures as frightening and/or aggressive.
3. Disparage men and be hostile to masculinity.
4. Be confused as to their sexual identity.
5. Have limitations of personal, social adjustment.

No. 1 - in general, no significant difference was found except in one area: a hostile dependent tie to the mother kept cropping up in the homosexual women much more often than in the heterosexual women.

No. 2 - A significant difference was found. More than half of the homosexual women found female figures to be frightening and/or aggressive, as against only one of the control group.

No. 3 - No significant difference. The homosexual women were found to be only slightly more disparaging of men than were the heterosexual women.

No. 4 - Yes, a significant difference. The homosexual women had many who were confused as to their sexual identity.

No. 5 - Yes, somewhat. The "somewhat" Dr. Armon felt was primarily due to the very tenuous position the Lesbian holds in society rather than any innate qualities.

Comments and sidelights: No evidence was found to support the "oral sadistic" or "genetic" theory of homosexual fixation. This theory states that Lesbians are "fixated" at a more primitive level than male homosexuals. No difference was found between the homosexual women and the heterosexual women in tests that would bear out this theory. Dr. Armon's conclusion was that sexual problems may exist in the homosexual female, but that the whole personality may not remain infantile per the genetic theory.

In fear of attack by men there was no significant difference between the two groups. The only difference found was stumbled upon by accident when Dr. Armon overheard a conversation between members of the control group

wherein they were discussing their fear of attack by strange men: they expected their husbands to protect them from any such hazard.

An interesting facet turned up was the conflict between what the women said in interview as opposed to what was shown by test. One conflict shown was that some of the homosexual women said they disliked men very much; but their tests did not bear this feeling out.

One of the tests was to draw a picture of a man and of a woman. In the control group the general rule was well-drawn women and rather feminine looking men. In the homosexual group there were two sets: those who drew very masculine looking men and only slightly less masculine looking women, and those who drew very feminine looking women and only slightly less feminine looking men. This might mean a number of things, according to Dr. Armon. It might mean that a person tends to identify with himself and therefore to draw even the opposite sex to look like himself. Regarding No. 4 on sexual confusion in the homosexual woman: While the statistical answer was "yes" the truth, Dr. Armon felt, was not so simple. In the homosexual group there was disturbance and the most extreme examples came from it. About one-third gave disturbed drawings, but a wide range was covered therein. On the other hand, of the two-thirds left, some of the best drawings of both groups came from the homosexual women. It left Dr. Armon to wonder what was significant.

Regarding the homosexual interviews, she was left with the human understanding that in the light of these people's backgrounds there was hardly any route left for them to travel. Regarding the tests and statistical analyses, she was not given as much insight and understanding.

In the Rorschach tests both groups saw unreal people; no significant difference. There were paranoic tendencies found in both groups, but not more in one than in the other. Color reactivity in the Rorschach tests were much higher in the control group than in the homosexual group. A high rating on this test usually means that the person involved has a high degree of emotional freedom and spontaneity. This finding has a number of interpretations. One may be that homosexual women, because of their position in society, early learn to guard their reactions. Or, it may mean that since many homosexual women affect

masculine mannerisms, they emulate the masculine quality of control over their emotions as little children, considering emotional spontaneity to be "sissy". Or, it may mean anything the individual researcher's bias wants it to mean.

Mrs. Virginia Armon, Ph.D., was very tired and she said, "It was a tremendous amount of work and all relatively meaningless!" This reporter was not so sure...the significance of insignificance is quite meaningful. She was also impressed at the number of preconceived ideas that Dr. Armon had discarded in the course of the study.

Dr. Armon said that she should start all over with another group of women to see if she got similar results. But lacking the immediate possibility of that, she was concerned that her dissertation should be published and become available to all students in the field as there is no comparable study on a group of women available in the literature. "There is one case study on one Lesbian available," stated Dr. Armon.

* * * * *

NEW HOMOPHILE ORGANIZATION

The first Quarterly Report of the Wicker Research Studies, a newly-formed homophile organization which now takes in the Southern states, was published in March, 1959.

The organization, which has applied for incorporation in Mississippi, has branches in Louisiana and Texas. Subscriptions for the quarterly newsletter may be obtained by sending a dollar along with your name and address to Wicker Research Studies, P.O. Box 7929, Austin, Texas.

While the Daughters of Bilitis as an organization is flattered that the Wicker group thinks so highly of our aims and purposes (as published on the inside front cover of THE LADDER) as to use the same credo verbatim in their publication, the DOB wishes to disclaim any direct connection with Wicker Research Studies. As the Wicker Quarterly points out, there are "other groups working toward the same ends but following diversified routes."

The Old Ones

By Colvin Marks

"That is no country for old men."
-W. B. Yeats

It's the old ones that bother me; you know, the old guys who hang around Lesbians just to buy them a beer and spill out their wheezy autobiographies.

In the old days when this city was going - really - swinging - the bars on Jordan Street were filled with girls, a few queens, and the old Johns. One big sideshow: We danced and drank, passed out phone numbers, held hands over the table - gay gay Gay!

On the nights that the dikes bored me - it was possible, then, to be bored with girls, with so many of them - I'd strut in high fem drag, making like de Pompadour, let the Johns buy me drinks, and listen to them for entertainment. And the stories, the broken-hearted stories. The old guys loved the girls, and never asked for anything but a kind ear. So I'd listen. The stories were always the same: The wife who died or left with the iceman, the un-Prodigal sons, and the sadness of it all, and have another beer on me. All the same.

Then I swore off Johns. In The Masque, on a slow night, I sat next to an old guy who looked like living alcoholic death. He examined my face, "Young lady", young lady.. ..he hadn't been here long, "You look intelligent. Sit down and be intelligent." He shot a finger in my face, "do you know what you're looking for?"

"Yes, a girl."

"A or any? Specify."

"A girl", I specified. It's the truth, I was, but after a while I forgot to look for her.

"Do you drink?"

"Yes", I'd suffer cross-examination for a free one.

"I drink, too, or is it obvious? Used to be a reporter, but wrote poetry on the side. Horrible stuff. Maudlin, idealist poetry. I was always looking for something. Didn't know what though, not girls, not boys, I thought I could find the answer. The Answer-- you don't happen to know it, do you?"

There was something in this guy that bothered me. All of a sudden I felt like I was sitting on wormwood, and any minute the props would be kicked out from under me. I dived for it, "The Answer to what?"

"The answer to everything we're afraid to ask, because we know just because there is a question, there is not necessarily an answer. And that's a terrible thing to know. The Answer to Why and How", he flung his arm in a broad gesture that included the bar and outside. "All of this. It never came, except once, two years after I traded words for liquor, it came. I was drunk. Drunk with wine and the tragedy of not knowing."

He swallowed a glass of burgundy, and with the intensity of a prophet, leaned towards me. "And, oh God, there I was rocking and reeling like in some crazy cradle and what should come out of the mists but the quintessence. Do you know what I think I am talking about? In the name of God the Mother and you think there is not truth in alcohol--it came. I tapped the Universe. The Answer. Simple as a drop of water, and Bango--it slid off me like mercury. I scraped my nose on the pavement trying to find it. Crying, scratching the gutter, with my mouth shaking and stomach aching. Crying like a small deprived animal. And when I woke up to a negative sun coldly displaying those gray victorian houses this city is so full of --- I lay there. What is the use of it all--of knowing. You discover something good beautiful pure, the common denominator, the goddam essence--and bango, it's gone. Everything tastes pale: good and evil, black and white, it fades to a dull indifference, an unrelieved staleness. But I stumble along, and

with each bottled delusion wait for it.

"And what eats me--It was so goddam simple. So simple". His mouth contracted, his face disintegrated, as he rolled his head on the bar, shaking and crying, "so damn simple."

That's the night I swore off Johns. In fact I swore off gay bars. Why should some old drunk spilling off his mouth rack me up like that. I don't know. Anyway, I left the city for four years of sobriety, good job, no dikes, no Johns. Specially no Johns; they hit me like ghosts. Whimpering ghosts with threats and revelations of all the things you try to escape through a gay bar. Somehow the phantom fears come out of the dark and assume tangible visible shapes there: the grim certainties flit about and puncture the butterfly laughter. The tomorrows and the "what are you looking for" and the pathos pushed in your face. The teary echoes of a hundred old men flutter in my stomach beside the beer.

I met one more, the last one, because I'm not going back again. The whole scene bothers me.

After four years, I arrive in my gay city, trot right up to Jordan Street, expecting cheers and open arms. The boys in beards and the tourists are there en masse. I duck my head in and out of the old hangouts. It's all the same, but the girls. No girls. Where are those dikes?

Ridiculous! People don't disappear; maybe they're in hiding--elections are coming up. Jordan Street, even at night looks shabbier, and more sordid than I had remembered. That moment in Jordan Street metamorphosized, I felt strange, even queer; but not gay, not a bit gay. Just...Queer, and it tasted bad.

In the old 1550, which was now a commuter's luncheon joint, I stopped and downed a few sherrys. Then I set off again, determined to root out the gay spots and enjoy them--if I ever found them.

So up and down, up and down, I covered every bar in the

area. The old man's question boiled in me, as I passed The Masque for the fifth time, "What are you looking for?." The answer wasn't so simple this time. I didn't know, but I was deperate to find it. I'd know when it came.

Somebody pulled on my arm. It was a John. I knew one thing: I didn't need a John around. He wore an unpressed, grease-spotted suit; the blood vessels in his face bulged from alcohol. He was sober--the kind of sober one is after twenty years on the bottle.

"Where are the girls?", he asked.

"Mister, if I knew, I'd be there myself." He wouldn't let go of my arm.

"Where are all the girls? I'm Jimmie Otis. They all know me."

"I don't know, Sir," those bleary Bambi eyes pleading at me.

"I'm not trying to annoy you, I just wanna know where the girls are. They all love me; I buy 'em drinks and we talk, that's all."

"Sir, if I knew where they were, I'd tell you. I have to go. I have to meet someone."

He leaned closer, "Don't be mad at me. I just wanna see the girls". I pulled my arm away, "I have to meet someone." Then he took my hand, and kissed it, almost with reverence. The old Cavalier.

I hauled away, and charged up the street. " I have to meet someone." Oh, I'm too much, even for myself. Damn Johns, always louse up the gay scene like ghosts. Only there wasn't any gay scene.

All the way to the car, I knew. I knew before I came back. There's nobody in Jordan Street for Jimmie Otis, or me. Nobody. There never was. One of us was pathetic, the other, a fool. I figure I know which is which.

Renee Vivien
Forgotten Lesbian Poet

BY GENE DAMON AND LEE STUART

WHEN THE PUBLIC IGNORES THE POORLY-WRITTEN, CHEAPLY-SENSATIONAL LESBIAN LITERATURE, IT IS WITH GOOD CAUSE. SOMETIMES, HOWEVER, A TRULY SIGNIFICANT ARTIST IS IGNORED ON THE GROUNDS OF CONTENT RATHER THAN QUALITY. ONE OF THE MOST TRAGIC STORIES OF LITERARY HISTORY IS THAT OF RENEE VIVIEN.

RENEE VIVIEN WAS BORN PAULINE TARN IN 1877 IN LONDON, THE DAUGHTER OF JOHN TARN OF ENGLAND AND MARY GILLET BENNETT OF JACKSON, MICHIGAN. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A FEW UNHAPPY YEARS IN ENGLAND, MISS VIVIEN MADE HER HOME IN PARIS. AN AMPLE PERSONAL FORTUNE ENABLED HER TO LIVE IN LUXURY AND TO MAKE MANY LENGTHY TRIPS. AT 22 SHE MET AND BECAME CLOSE FRIENDS WITH NATALIE CLIFFORD BARNEY, AN INDEPENDENTLY-WEALTHY YOUNG AMERICAN WOMAN.

MISS BARNEY INTRODUCED RENEE VIVIEN TO SAPPHO. RENEE SET ABOUT LEARNING GREEK IN ORDER TO READ SAPPHO IN THE ORIGINAL AND SUBSEQUENTLY RENDERED ALL THE SAPPHIC FRAGMENTS INTO PROSE AND THEN INTO DEVELOPMENTAL POETRY. SHE WAS AN ARDENT DISCIPLE OF BAUDELAIRE AND VERLAINE AND TRIED HARD TO BE A PAGAN; HOWEVER, SHE WAS TOO OBSESSED WITH CHRISTIAN CONCEPTS OF CHASTITY AND SIN TO BE A SUCCESSFUL PAGAN.

AN ADMITTED LESBIAN FROM HER EARLIEST YEARS, RENEE VIVIEN WROTE EXCLUSIVELY ON EVERY ASPECT OF LESBIAN LOVE. SHE OFTEN USED THE MUSICAL SAPPHIC METER AND HER POETRY HAS BEEN CALLED THE MOST PERFECT IN FORM WRITTEN IN FRENCH IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THIS CENTURY. THIS IS TREMENDOUS PRAISE IN VIEW OF THE CENSORSHIP SURROUNDING OUTRIGHT LESBIAN VERSE.

THE STAID, AUTHORITATIVE "COLUMBIA DICTIONARY OF MODERN EUROPEAN LITERATURE" SAYS IN ITS ARTICLE ON MISS VIVIEN THAT HER POETRY HAS "BEEN UNJUSTLY NEGLECTED BECAUSE OF ITS EXALTATION OF LESBIAN LOVE." IT FURTHER STATES THAT "HER VERSES MERIT RESPECT AND ADMIRATION BECAUSE OF THEIR DELICATE PURITY AND PERFECTION OF FORM."

MISS VIVIEN LIVED ONLY 32 YEARS AND HER COLLECTED VERSE RUNS TO 12 VOLUMES, A REMARKABLE QUANTITY FOR SO SHORT A LIFE. BESIDES POETRY SHE PUBLISHED A NOVEL, TWO COLLECTIONS OF PROSE POEMS (FREE VERSE), A BOOK OF TALES AND SEVERAL ESSAYS. THESE PROSE WORKS ARE OF INTEREST PRIMARILY FOR THEIR BIOGRAPHICAL DATA AS THEY ARE INFERIOR TO HER POETRY. IN AN EFFORT TO RECAPTURE THE GOLDEN AGE OF GREECE SHE PURCHASED A VILLA AT MYTILENE (LESBOS) AND SPENT PART OF EACH YEAR THERE.

MISS VIVIEN'S POETRY TELLS IN PERFECT CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE THE STORIES OF HER THREE LOVE AFFAIRS (ALL WOMEN) AND OF THE CRUELTY OF THE BIASED CIVILIZATION WHICH CONDEMNS SUCH BEAUTIFUL LOVE. ALWAYS DELICATE, SHE DIED OF EXHAUSTION AND FASTING AT PARIS IN 1909.

IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY TRAGIC THAT SO FINE AN ARTIST DIED AT 32 BUT EVEN MORE TRAGIC THAT NONE OF HER POETRY (NOR INDEED ANY OF HER WORK) HAS EVER BEEN TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH. IT IS IRONIC, TOO, IN THAT HER NATIVE TONGUE WAS ENGLISH. PERHAPS SHE KNEW NO ENGLISH CENSOR WOULD ALLOW HER TO WRITE AND PUBLISH IN PEACE. THOUGH A GOOD DEAL OF CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHICAL COMMENT HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT HER LIFE AND WORK IN FRENCH, LITTLE HAS APPEARED IN THIS COUNTRY. WITHOUT DOUBT A QUALIFIED PERSON OUGHT TO TRANSLATE HER WORK INTO ENGLISH THAT WE ALL MIGHT SHARE THE BEAUTY OF HER WORDS.

A NUMBER OF YEARS AFTER MISS VIVIEN'S DEATH THE DISTINGUISHED CRITIC, SALOMAN REINACH, IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST, WROTE A BEAUTIFUL TRIBUTE TO HER WORK: "I COULD QUOTE FROM HER VOLUMES AT LEAST TWO HUNDRED VERSES WHICH RANK AMONG THE FINEST SPECIMENS OF FRENCH POETRY. HER GENIUS - FOR GENIUS SHE HAD - IS THE MORE EXTRAORDINARY AS SHE WROTE IN A LANGUAGE NOT HER OWN. I FEEL SURE SHE WILL BE FAMOUS ONE DAY, AND THINK IT DESIRABLE THAT WE SHOULD TRY TO KNOW MORE ABOUT HER BEFORE IT GETS TOO LATE"

"HERESY IS BY NO MEANS ALWAYS RIGHT - BUT HERESY HAS BEEN THE GROWING POINT OF SOCIETY; SOCIETY USES FORCE TO CHECK DISSENT AT ITS PERIL. EVERY GREAT RELIGION AND THE WHOLE BODY OF SCIENCE BEGAN WITH A CHALLENGE TO ACCEPTED TRADITIONS."

- NORMAN THOMAS

Poems of Renee Vivien translated for THE LADDER by Barbara Stephens

MOURNFUL BACCHANTE

The day never pierces more than sharp arrows,
  The wood astonish'd with the beauty of the nights,
And the murky hour when dance the Bacchantes
  'Mid pressure of the languid rhymes.

Their tangled hair weeps the blood of the vines,
  Their light feet fickle as the swirl of winds,
And the rose of their limbs, the pliancy of lines
  Are merged in the forest of smiles.

Most youthful of singer who calls the pale,
  Amorous throat heavy with sighs,
Never the same, she is pale-
  Her brow is bitter with the storm of the waves.

The wine, when sun prolongs its vintage
  Never brings more than generous loss;
She is drunken by halves, but her drinking forlorn
  And the black foliage wreathes her pallid brow.

In all she's weary of the merry falsehoods
  And the coming of cold and lengthened morns;
Corrupted the flame and honeyed caresses,
  She dreams, 'mid the roses of banquets.

This one smiles from the kisses forgotten,
  She'll fear not desire that's without pain;
That one seeing and with melancholy
  On evenings of pained profusion of flowers.

PROLONG THE NIGHT

Prolong the night, Goddess to whom we yearn-
  Remove from us the gold-sandalled dawn,
Already on the sea, the first twilights
  Are taken away on their wing.

Let us beware yet, in veiled slumber
  Having forgotten the cruelty of day
That the wine of shadow and the wine of the stars
  Fill to the brim with love!

Since no one knows what dawn arises,
  Bringing the grey prophesy with his hands,
We tremble 'fore day - and our dream
  Fears the morrow.

Ah! Watching the hand on our closed eyelids
  Recalling in vain the sweetness we created,
Goddess, whom pleasures the ruin of roses,
  Prolong the night!

SONNET TO THE ANDROGYNE

Thy regal youth has the melancholy
  Of the North where the fog obliterates the colors,
You bring dissention and desire to tears,
  Grave as Hamlet, pale as Ophelia.

Thou passeth in the flesh as one madness
  As she, extravagant of song and the flowers,
And under the arrogance hiding your sorrows
  Without which fixity of your glance is forgotten.

Mouse, blonde lover, or in fancy, a dark love,
  Your twofold attire, as like a double lodestone,
And your flesh yearns now with a taper's cold ardor.

My heart distressed in pain when I see
  Your calm princely brow and virgin blue eye
Now the one, then the other, and both to the occasion.

LESBIANA

101 THE LITTLE LESS BY ANGELA DU MAURIER, DOUBLEDAY, 1941.
(EASILY OBTAINED SECOND HAND)

THE STORY OF SHY, REPRESSED CONVENT EDUCATED VIVIAN OSBORNE AND HER SELFLESS LOVE AND DEVOTION FOR MOST OF HER LIFE TO UNHAPPILY MARRIED VIRGINIA CLARE. WHILE QUITE WELL WRITTEN AND VERY SATISFYING FOR THE MOST PART, VIRGINIA CLARE IS A FAILURE AS A PARTNER AND THE ENDING IS SAD FOR BOTH PARTICIPANTS. THE TITLE IS INTERESTING AS IT CAME FROM A SHORT VERSE OF BROWNING'S "OH, THE LITTLE MORE, AND HOW MUCH IT IS! AND THE LITTLE LESS, AND WHAT WORLDS AWAY!"

102 ASKING FOR TROUBLE BY JOE RAYTER. MORROW, 1955.

A HARD BOILED MYSTERY BY A WOMAN WRITING UNDER A MALE PSEUDONYM AND IN A MAN'S STYLE. THE PLOT IS PRETTY MIXED UP. ONE OF THE MAJOR CHARACTERS IS JULIA PHELPS A RATHER CYNICAL LESBIAN. HER TIEUP WITH THE SECOND VICTIM IS IMPORTANT TO THE STORY. NOT TOO PLAUSIBLE BUT FINE FOR MYSTERY FANS.

103 JANET AND HER DEAR PHEBE BY CLARISSA DIXON. NEW YORK 1906.

TWO LITTLE GIRL CHUMS, SEPARATED BY THEIR FAMILIES' QUARREL MEET AGAIN AS ADULTS AND RENEW THEIR FERVENT FRIENDSHIP. (INCIDENTALLY, I AM QUITE SURE THE AUTHOR HAD NO LESBIAN INTENTIONS IN THIS CHARMING CHILDREN'S BOOK. YET, I FIND THE FEELINGS EXPRESSED BY THE WOMEN AT THEIR MEETING RATHER TOO STRONG FOR EVEN THAT VERY SENTIMENTAL PERIOD. THE MARRIED ONE REVEALS SHE INTENDED SPENDING HER HONEYMOON IN A SEARCH FOR HER GIRLHOOD CHUM; THE ENGAGED ONE PROCLAIMS HER HAPPINESS NOW COMPLETE, WITH HIM, WITH YOU.")

WILL CALL

A Story by VERN NIVEN

Dot stepped off the elevator onto the third floor and started down the hall towards the Audit Department. She knew the girl was watching her and the uncomfortable prickling on the back of her neck began again. For the past two weeks that girl in Will Call had watched her closely, too closely. Dot had noticed the girl for the first time late one afternoon. She had stopped to talk with the elevator operator who was seated across the hall from Will Call, her gaze had wandered for a moment and her eyes suddenly met the steady gaze of the girl. The very naked curiosity in the look had caused her stomach to turn nervously. Flushing, she had looked back at the elevator operator, mumbled something about running on and hurriedly left the hall. Since then Dot had been painfully aware of the girl. She seemed to be everywhere and always watching her. At first Dot had tried laughing about it to herself but the feeling of fear and pressure that look brought weren't very funny.

Seated safely at her desk in Audit, alone for once, Dot lit a cigarette and started totaling some figures on the sheet in front of her. A slight step and a contrived nervous cough caused her to look up. "Are you Dot Gordon?", the girl was standing there.

"Yes, yes I am," Dot stammered, "What can I do for you?"

"Nothing, I mean nothing important, I mean not business, I mean would you care to take your coffee break with me, if you're not going with someone else," the girl finished in a rush and then stood white and shaky in the doorway.

Dot hesitated a moment and then gulping air and control into her lungs, answered her quietly. "Of course, I'd like to go with you, is 10:30 allright?"

The girl smiled, (for the first time Dot thought), and answered as if some fear had left her. "Oh that would be

fine, I'll wait for you in front of Will Call."

"I'll see you at 10:30 then," Dot answered rapidly and turned away from the girl abruptly, going back to work. She held her control rigidly until the girl's footsteps died away in the hall. The figures blurred and Dot realized the noise in her ears was the sound of her own heart. Oh you little fool, she told herself angrily, stop this foolish reaction, she's just a very pretty little girl, just a kid. She can't possibly know why she stares at you. She's probably only 21 or 22 and you're old enough to avoid her for that reason if for no other. Work was impossible, at least figure work, so Dot took a stack of invoices out of one of the baskets on the file cases and methodically alphabetized them. She realized suddenly that she didn't even know the girl's name and that fact somehow lessened the tension and she laughed to herself and worked all the faster. Now that she had let her defenses down her mind kept swinging back to her first year in Denver.

She had left a small Iowa town to get away from the fact that she didn't fit in any longer. Being 25, unmarried and not intending to remedy the situation had raised too many unanswerable questions among her friends and family. A city and anonymity seemed the solution to all her problems and for the first few months it had been wonderful, in a lonely way. When her shyness wore off she had taken in a few of the local sights and met Marty. Marty had really taken the dust off Dot, and most of her skin too. Well, at least she had given Dot the polish necessary to get ahead and hold a difficult job. The damage she had done to Dot's heart was at least partially compensated for by her having helped Dot find her real personality.

Marty's shadows had ceased to haunt Dot in recent months and the presence of the girl from Will Call frightened her more than a little. I can't go through anything with anyone ever, she told herself.

At 10:25 she got up leisurely from her desk, combed her hair and started slowly down the hall toward Will Call, the girl's eyes watched her all the length of the hall. The closer Dot came, the more her face gave her fear away.

The girl smiled warmly at Dot, and very lightly touched her arm. "I'm awfully glad you would go with me, I don't know anyone here in the store and I feel very silly sitting alone." Her gaze was so direct and her eyes so seriously denying the light tone of her voice that Dot's heart began thudding nervously again.

"Let's go to Norris's for coffee," Dot suggested. "It's closest and I like booths better than stools."

"Oh that's fine with me, anywhere you say," the girl smiled again and Dot realized with a sudden pang inside that she was lovely, very much so. Dot pressed the elevator button and they waited side by side, chatting very little, both too nervous to be too eager to speak.

When they were seated in Norris's with coffee in front of them, Dot lit a cigarette after offering one to the girl and asked, "What is your name?"

The girl flushed and laughed, "That's right, I never said, how silly of me, I'm Norah Wotan. I knew your name and I guess I forgot you couldn't have known mine."

"Is Denver your home?" Dot queried.

"No, I came up here last month from Pueblo, to stay with my sister. She's an airline stewardess and she didn't like staying alone so mom said I could come up here. Sis knew Mr. Kason at the store and he got me the job in Will Call."

As they talked the nervousness in Dot disappeared and they soon were happily exchanging bits of information and laughing together almost as easily as old friends.

Coming out of Norris's Dot glanced at her watch. "It's after 10:45 and we're late, we ought to hurry, it doesn't matter so much for me but you're new and you'd better not be too late."

Norah smiled as eagerly as a baby and said, "Ok, I'll race you back." She turned fast on her last word and started running across the street and Dot ran after her. From the corner of her eye Dot saw the truck back out of the loading

dock and turn rapidly towards Norah. She reached out and grabbed her arm jerking her back against her side. The truck rumbled past and they stood there, breathless and shaken.

Then all the tension of the morning snapped in Dot and she turned the girl toward her sharply, "You fool, you little fool, you could have been killed," Dot fairly hollered.

Norah looked up into Dot's white face, and looked at each feature separately as if memorizing. "I'm not damaged Dot, thanks to you, but tell me, would you really care?" Her voice was low and very serious and her eyes had taken on that peculiar fixed staring again. Involuntarily Dot tightened her grip on Norah's arm and pulled her onto the sidewalk. Dot didn't answer for a moment and they started walking slowly back towards work.

Then Dot stopped again and Norah stopped beside her, waiting. Dot looked down at Norah and returned her intent glance and then asked her, "Don't you realize what you asked me?" Norah smiled back at her, "I realize."

They stood there a moment longer and then walked back to the store with their hands nearly touching and a fine, wild sweet singing rising inside them.

DOB & MATTACHINE CONVENTIONS SET

THE FIRST NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS HAS BEEN SET FOR THE LAST WEEK IN MAY, 1960, IN SAN FRANCISCO.

THIS WILL BE THE FIRST TIME TO OUR KNOWLEDGE THAT A COMPLETE CONVENTION PROGRAM WILL BE DEVOTED TO THE LESBIAN. MUCH HAS BEEN SAID AND WRITTEN ABOUT THE MALE HOMOSEXUAL, BUT THERE IS STILL ALL TOO LITTLE MATERIAL AVAILABLE ABOUT THE LESBIAN. IT IS THE HOPE OF THE DOB THAT THIS SITUATION CAN BE CORRECTED.

MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE DAUGHTERS ARE URGED TO PLAN AHEAD FOR VACATIONS OR A "LONG WEEK END" IN SAN FRANCISCO OVER THE MEMORIAL

DAY WEEK END, 1960. THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS INVITED TO ATTEND. ONLY THE BUSINESS MEETING WILL BE CLOSED SESSION.

MEANWHILE, THE DENVER AREA COUNCIL IS BUSILY PREPARING FOR THE 6TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE MATTACHINE SOCIETY TO BE HELD IN COLORADO'S CAPITAL CITY SEPTEMBER 4-7, 1959.

"NEW FRONTIERS IN ACCEPTANCE OF THE HOMOPHILE" IS TO BE THE CONVENTION'S THEME, SIGNIFYING THE NEW TREND IN OPEN SUBJECTION OF HOMOPHILIA, AND ALSO CONNECTING THE THEME TO A WESTERN MOTIF AND THE COLORADO RUSH TO THE ROCKIES CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION BEING OBSERVED BY THE STATE THIS YEAR.

THE ALBANY HOTEL, CONVENIENTLY SITUATED IN DOWNTOWN DENVER, HAS BEEN SELECTED AS CONVENTION HEADQUARTERS.

Should Homosexuals Marry?

A New York radio broadcast last month presented a panel discussion program titled: "Should the Homosexual Marry?" Those participating in the program were:

Mrs. Lee R. Steiner	-	Moderator
Dr. S. E. Graw	-	Mattachine Society
Vickie Martin	-	Daughters of Bilitis
Dr. Michael-Smith	-	Psychoanalyst

Mrs. Steiner as moderator opened the program by asking each of the guests their opinion on the subject.

Dr. Michael-Smith said that he believed that a homosexual should not consider marriage without undergoing psychotherapy and stressed the need for honesty with the heterosexual partner.

Vickie Martin's personal opinion was that an exclusive homosexual should definitely not marry. "My observation

is that marriage of many homosexuals to heterosexuals ends only in chaos."

Dr. Graw stated he did not agree with Miss Martin's opinion and went on to say he believed that if the heterosexual partner was not too demanding a satisfactory relationship could be built upon companionship.

Mrs. Steiner then went on to ask Miss Martin what she meant by the term "exclusive homosexual". Miss Martin explained by saying that authorities were inclined to group homosexuals with bi-sexual people, including the pseudo-homosexual or truly heterosexual who does have some homosexual relationships. She claimed the "exclusive" homosexual is one who is strictly homosexual.

The question was asked, "What is the point of view the homosexual wants the public to take?" The agreed upon answer by all was, "understanding."

Dr. Michael-Smith went on to say that should both the homosexual and heterosexual partners have neurotic problems the marriage would end up in fireworks. Miss Martin then brought up the point that homosexuals are no more neurotic than heterosexuals and that there is very little difference between the two as human beings.

Dr. Michael-Smith also brought out another point that when a marriage of this type does occur that usually the homosexual will expect the heterosexual to adjust to the situation.

"Many psychologists and psychiatrists, as well as the public in general, think of marriage as the cure for homosexuality. I have done some extensive reading on the subject, and I don't believe there is such a thing as a cure for homosexuality - since it is not a disease," Miss Martin declared. "More and more authorities are coming to realize that homosexuality has been a part of every culture - including our own."

Mrs. Steiner being a marriage counsellor in private life pointed out that marriage counsellors do not

recommend entering into anything on a false basis. She also said that often the homosexual will blame the heterosexual partner for impotency and/or frigidity.

As there was no direct conclusion drawn the program was brought to a close with the guests agreeing that basically this was an individual problem.

- Patti Brown

A Lesbian Looks at *Tennessee Williams*

A critic writing in the "New Republic" last year, at the time Tennessee Williams' "Garden District" was being presented off-Broadway, lamented the number of unescorted males in the audience who protested "sibilantly" that Williams was merely discussing the perfectly normal.

"Garden District", as New Yorkers last year and San Franciscans this year know, consists of two one-act plays. The first, and slightest one, deals with a presumably Lesbian relationship involving extreme dominance. The second and more ambitious one tells of the "chaste" poetson of a fiercely possessive mother, who has died under

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mysterious circumstances. A powerful build-up of tension leads to the final revelation - a concentrated dose of homosexual prostitution, violence, mutilation and cannibalism - that is guaranteed to chill.

Whether or not the offended critic of the "New Republic" overheard his neighbors correctly we do not know, though it seems at least doubtful if they whispered, as he suggests in his peculiar way. There may, at any rate, be some value in a more reliable report of a (woman) homosexual's reaction to Tennessee William's production.

It goes without saying that she appreciates his unfailing artistry, and too, his boldness in again exploring for playgoers the realm of the illicit and the bizarre. There need be, and should be, no limits to the artist's concern with humanity in all its aspects.....

Beyond that, she, like most of the audience, is repelled by the ugliness and horror in these plays. What is most repulsive is the theme itself - which is, of course, not the deviant but the predatory. She does not maintain that Williams is "dealing with the perfectly normal". On the contrary, he is dealing with several varieties of the abnormal, no matter how that may be defined. But she knows (as how many still do not know?) that the deviant need not be the predatory. And she feels that the "most" abnormal aspect of Williams' work, in any sense deeper than the purely statistical, is not the deviant sexual relationships but the quality of the relationships.

She knows, finally, that the human, supporting kind of love which Tennessee Williams cannot quite believe in, does exist in her own world - that the world is not inhabited exclusively, as is Tennessee Williams', by Cornelia Scotts and Violet Venables.

- Florence Conrad

NOTE: If you live in or near San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York or Providence, R.I., you can join the DOB. Contact San Francisco headquarters for information.

CINEMATIC FLASHES...

Although William Holden will lend his usually female-captivating presence to the film, in "The Catalyst" (a Robert Aldrich production scheduled for Fall shooting in France) the girls will go for each other!

Les girls? - none other than Ava (Naked Maja) Gardner and Martine (Caroline Cherie) Carol!

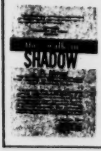
* * *

First film of new New York motion picture company will be Tereska Torres' well-known novel, "Women's Barracks." Nato De Angeles will bring this "story of women soldiers of the Free French army and their adventures in and out of love with various men and with each other" (unquote "Astra's Tower") to the screen under the banner of Paradise Productions.

* * *

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above flashes came from the "jet-propelled desk" of Forrest J. Ackerman, literary agent and science fiction addict, who has been faithfully keeping THE LADDER apprised of events of interest in the film world.

Adding the two films mentioned above to the proposed filming of Radclyffe Hall's famed "Well of Loneliness" would seem to indicate a sudden upsurge of interest in the Lesbian by movie-makers.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SAN FRANCISCO AREA

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13 - BUSINESS MEETING AT 2174 CALIFORNIA ST., (BASEMENT APARTMENT) 8 P.M.

SATURDAY, MAY 23 - PARTY. MEMBERS AND GUESTS ONLY. RESERVATIONS TO OFFICE OR SOCIAL CHAIRMAN BY WEDNESDAY, MAY 20.

FRIDAY, MAY 29 - GAB 'N JAVA, 3927 ARMY ST., 8 P.M.

SATURDAY, JUNE 6 - LADDER WORK PARTY. FROM NOON ON AT THE DOB OFFICES. COME ON DOWN AND HELP ASSEMBLE AND MAIL THE LADDER.

SATURDAY, JUNE 20 - SPAGHETTI FEED. ANOTHER OPEN EVENT TO WHICH THE FELLOWS ARE INVITED. PARTICULARS IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

NEW YORK AREA

SATURDAY, MAY 16 - 3 P.M., BUSINESS MEETING, 1144 BROADWAY, ROOM 304.
6 P.M., GROUP RESTAURANT DINNER.
8 P.M., GAB 'N JAVA AT 195 BENNETT AVE., APT. 3-B.

SATURDAY, JUNE 20 - JOINT PICNIC WITH MATTACHINE SOCIETY ON FIRE ISLAND.

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